



School Quality Review Report

McCulloch Jr. High School
Marion Community School Corporation
January 11 & 31, 2018

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I. Background on the School Quality Review

Public Law 221 (PL 221) was passed in 1999 before the enactment of the federal *No Child Left behind Act* (NCLB). It serves as the state's accountability framework. Among other sanctions, the law authorizes the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) to assign an expert team to conduct a School Quality Review for schools placed in the lowest category or designation of school performance for two consecutive years.

(a) The board shall direct that the department conduct a quality review of a school that is subject to IC 20-31-9-3. (b) The board shall determine the scope of the review and appoint an expert team under IC 20-31-9-3. (Indiana State Board of Education; 511 IAC 6.2-8-2; filed Jan 28, 2011, 3:08 p.m.: 20110223-IR-511100502FRA)

The school quality review (SQR) is a needs assessment meant to evaluate the academic program and operational conditions within an eligible school. The SQR will result in actionable feedback that will promote improvement, including the reallocation of resources or requests for technical assistance. The process is guided by a rubric (see Appendix B) aligned to the 8 Turnaround Principles. The school quality review includes a pre-visit analysis and planning meeting, onsite comprehensive review, and may include targeted follow-up visits.

State law authorizes the SBOE to establish an expert team to conduct the School Quality Review known as the Technical Assistance Team (TAT). Membership must include representatives from the community or region the school serves; and, may consist of school superintendents, members of governing bodies, teachers from high performing school corporations, and special consultants or advisers.

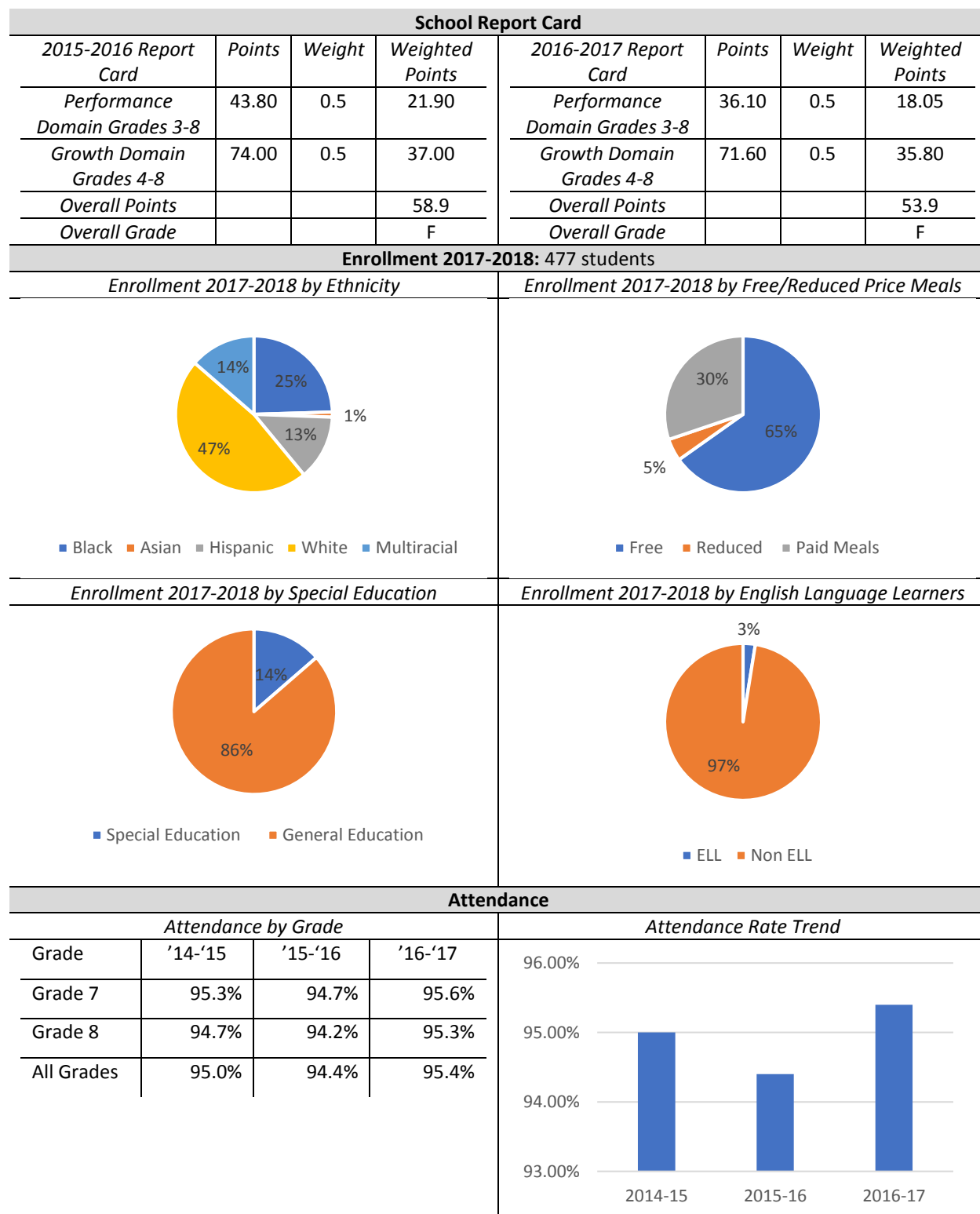
II. Overview of the School Quality Review Process

The School Quality Review process is designed to identify McCulloch Jr. High School's strengths and areas for improvement organized around the [United States Department of Education's Eight School Turnaround Principles](#). In particular, the School Quality Review process focused on three Turnaround Principles that were identified as priorities by the school and its district.

The on-site review consisted of the Technical Assistance Team (TAT) visiting the school for two days. During the two days, the TAT (1) conducted separate focus groups with students, teachers, and parents, (2) observed a professional learning community meeting with teachers, (3) conducted 36 classroom observations, and (4) interviewed school and district leaders.

Prior to the visit, teachers completed an online survey, with 10 of 34 teachers participating. Parents were also invited to complete a survey. Finally, the school leadership team completed a self-evaluation. Both surveys and the self-evaluation are made up of questions that align to school improvement principles and indicators (Appendix B).

III. Data Snapshot for McCulloch Jr. High School



IV. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #3: Effective Instruction

Background

The next three sections of the report illustrate the Technical Assistance Team’s key findings, supporting evidence, and overall rating for each of the school’s prioritized Turnaround Principles.

To thoughtfully identify these prioritized Turnaround Principles, school and district leaders used a “Turnaround Principle Alignment Tool” provided by the Indiana State Board of Education to determine the two to three Turnaround Principles that most closely align with the goals and strategies outlined in the school’s improvement plan.

This report focuses on these prioritized Turnaround Principles to provide a strategically targeted set of findings and recommendations. Additional evidence on the other five Turnaround Principles can be found in Appendix A of this report.

School Turnaround Principle #3: Effective Instruction			
Evidence Sources			
Classroom Observations, Teacher Focus Group, Instructional Leadership Team Meeting, Principal Meeting, District Focus Group, Teacher Survey Data, Student Focus Group, Parent Focus Group, Artifacts Provided by McCulloch Jr. High School & Marion Community Schools			
Rating			
1 <u>Ineffective</u>	2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u>	3 <u>Effective</u>	4 <u>Highly Effective</u>
<i>No evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Routine and consistent</i>	<i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i>
Evidence			
Strengths			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NWEA has the opportunity to provide meaningful diagnostic and benchmark data to inform school-wide and grade-level instructional decisions, including differentiated levels on Achieve 3000 for the GROW period, and gauging mid-year progress to inform resource and programmatic shifts. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of student performance data, and a willingness to use data to inform practice and improve instructional execution. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.5
Areas for Improvement			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In many classrooms, the “taught” curriculum does not match the rigor and expectations of the Indiana Academic Standards. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1, 4.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few classrooms implemented a variety of instructional strategies. Literacy across content areas and building numeracy skills are clear priorities; however, teachers are not provided an opportunity through 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 4.5

a professional coaching cycle to develop the deep knowledge and skills necessary to effectively execute rigorous instruction aligned to the Indiana Academic Standards.

- In a few classrooms was a cognitively busy learning environment observed, demonstrating low academic and behavioral expectations.
- 3.6

V. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #4: Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention Systems

School Turnaround Principle #4: Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention Systems			
Evidence Sources			
Classroom Observations, Teacher Focus Group, Instructional Leadership Team Meeting, Principal Meeting, District Focus Group, Teacher Survey Data, Artifacts Provided by School Leader			
Rating			
1 <u>Ineffective</u>	2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u>	3 <u>Effective</u>	4 <u>Highly Effective</u>
<i>No evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Routine and consistent</i>	<i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i>
Evidence			
Strengths			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnostic NWEA data is used to identify students that are two or more years behind in ELA or Math. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.5, 7.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The master schedule provides time for student intervention and enrichment. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.5, 4.5, 7.2
Areas for Improvement			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum maps do not align to Indiana Academic Standards and lack relevance to teachers as a meaningful source of information and resources. Teachers develop lessons that are not systematically linked to the Indiana Academic Standards. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis is infrequent and isolated from ongoing instructional decision-making and professional learning. Existing protocols focus disproportionately on analyzing change in numbers, not reflecting on instructional practice. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district does not provide formative assessments in literacy and math and there is minimal evidence that teachers use ongoing formative assessment data to gauge student progress or differentiate instruction. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.5, 3.6, 4.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students are assigned to ELA interventions on the same program during the GROW period, despite academic need. While the Achieve 3000 program does differentiate its content, the instructional delivery is insufficient as the sole support for students who are two or more grade-levels behind. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.5, 7.1

VI. Evidence and Rating for School Turnaround Principle #7: Effective Use of Time

School Turnaround Principle #7: Effective Use of Time			
Evidence Sources			
Classroom Observations, Teacher Focus Group, Instructional Leadership Team Meeting, Principal Meeting, District Leadership Meeting, Teacher Survey Data, Artifacts Provided by School Leader			
Rating			
1 <u>Ineffective</u>	2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u>	3 <u>Effective</u>	4 <u>Highly Effective</u>
<i>No evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Routine and consistent</i>	<i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i>
Evidence			
Strengths			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The master schedule provides a consistent opportunity for data driven, high quality remediation and enrichment. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.5, 7.1, 7.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The schedule has been intentionally designed to ensure regular opportunities for effective teacher collaboration are offered. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.3
Areas for Improvement			Aligned Turnaround Principle Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A single master schedule with traditional class offerings and a 30-minute intervention block for every student is not a sufficient model to meet the diverse student needs in the building. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition times are not well executed and waste instructional time. Expectations for teachers during transitions are unclear, and teachers expressed frustration with the bell-less transition model. Fluid student arrival times to class are counterproductive to establishing an environment conducive to learning. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.2

VII. Recommendations

Background

This section outlines an intentionally targeted set of recommendations that align to one or more of the school's prioritized Turnaround Principles. Anchored in the United States Department of Education's Turnaround Principles framework, these recommendations are representative of what the Technical Assistance Team believes to be the most immediate changes needed to accelerate growth in academic and non-academic student outcomes at McCulloch Jr. High School. These recommendations should not be thought of as an exhaustive set of school improvement strategies, but rather as a part of the ongoing and continuous school improvement process.

Recommendation 1
Equip teachers with a manageable set of concrete instructional strategies aligned to the College & Career Ready instructional shifts, and align professional learning time, classroom observation feedback, and professional development to promote continuous reflection and feedback on the execution and impact of these prioritized strategies.
Aligned Turnaround Principle(s)
3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4.2, 4.5, 7.3
Rationale
<p>Due to an observed lack of an instructional coaching cycle, teachers are ill-equipped to effectively design and execute standards-based instruction. As a result, classroom instruction regularly lacks rigor and instructional objectives do not align with the Indiana Academic Standards.</p> <p>There is a general school-wide focus on literacy and numeracy skills; however, the school lacks concrete and focused instructional priorities or systems to support teachers in their development of the skills necessary to deliver on that focus. Classroom observations revealed that multiple instructional strategies were evident in less than 2 out of 5 classrooms, and whole group instruction was the most observed instructional model. Professional learning time was unstructured, with little focus other than general topics of discussion. Nearly 50% of teacher survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “Our principal and school leaders observe and provide meaningful feedback to each teacher on a weekly basis to ensure instructional alignment with state standards.” As a result, several observed instructional strategies were not evidence-based or aligned to Indiana Academic Standards.</p> <p>One identified barrier to designing and executing on a clear and concise instructional vision are the myriad of instructional mandates put into place from the corporation level. Teachers are currently expected, at a minimum, to plan and execute instruction aligned to their content area, incorporate an assigned novel across their grade level, incorporate numeracy-related problems as daily activities across content, and lead a GROW class for interventions. Comments from the teacher survey reflected frustration with the recent number of new initiatives, and the lack of support and follow through from the leadership level accompanying them.</p> <p>To truly equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to lead effective instruction, school and district leadership must adopt a streamlined vision for high quality instruction and align all aspects of instructional support (professional learning, data analysis, and classroom observation & feedback) to that vision in order to build buy-in and ensure teachers receive the ongoing development required to truly change practice.</p>

Recommendation 2
Strategically reassign groups during GROW period based on formative assessment data aligned to Indiana Academic Standards for Math and ELA. This will ensure students who demonstrate the most significant academic needs are assigned to teachers who consistently implement best practice instructional strategies with fidelity.
Aligned Turnaround Principle(s)
4.5, 7.2
Rationale
The current intervention system, GROW, is not implemented with fidelity and lacks appropriate rigor and relevance for students.

The school has invested 30 minutes of daily instructional time for interventions (a total of 15 days of instruction) for ELA interventions. Currently, the benefits of the intervention block for students do not justify the significant investment of instructional time.

While diagnostic NWEA data has been used to strategically assign students to the appropriate level on the Achieve 3000 program to meet their zone of proximal development, groups remain largely unchanged throughout the year and lack strategic purpose. There is no system in place to collect and analyze ongoing formative data, and the school relies solely on the adaptive nature of the Achieve 3000 platform to differentiate instructional support.

Teacher guidance and direction during the GROW period is ineffective. The school leader has set school-wide expectations for GROW period; however, the inconsistency of implementation raises significant questions as to whether or not teachers understand or are invested in the program. There are a few teachers who take additional action to enhance the technology with strategies that keep students engaged, help them find meaning in the work, and create structures for students to monitor their ongoing progress; but, classroom observations revealed several students either not engaged with the intervention program, or doing something completely different such as playing games on their iPads. Feedback from students corroborated these observations, highlighting the fact that several of their peers are not engaged with the program in a meaningful way, clicking through the program without actively engaging with the content.

The intervention system at McCulloch is not designed to meet the learning needs of students who are two or more years behind in ELA and Mathematics. It is poorly planned, monitored, and evaluated for effectiveness. Long term planning should begin now to design a more targeted intervention program for the 2018-2019 school year. Given the urgency to improve student achievement, and the significant investment that has been made in the current intervention model, the school must immediately ensure that students with the greatest academic need are assigned to teachers who have demonstrated the capacity and willingness to effectively facilitate the Achieve 3000 program.

Recommendation 3

Redesign district-level curriculum maps so that they include scaffolded objectives aligned to the Indiana Academic Standards and are paced throughout the calendar year, with standards-based benchmark assessments to monitor student progress and inform meaningful academic interventions for students who fall behind.

Aligned Turnaround Principle(s)

3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4

Rationale

Although the school leaders identified district-level curriculum maps as a key instructional resource for teachers, it is unclear if they are accessible and relevant for teachers when planning instructional content. As a result, the taught curriculum in many classrooms does not align to the Indiana Academic Standards and scaffolding towards a rigorous depth of knowledge was only apparent in 25% of observed classrooms.

Teachers lack access to sufficient instructional resources and targeted professional development to plan and deliver rigorous instruction that scaffolds towards a rigorous depth of knowledge.

The following objectives were observed during classroom observations:

- "I can use word relationships to understand words"
- "I can understand and explain non-fiction text"
- "Cause and Effect"

- “Students will be able to master proportions”

These objectives do not align to any seventh or eighth grade standard, nor are they specific or measurable.

An evaluation of existing curriculum maps reveals multiple instances where the learning objectives listed are not aligned to the Indiana Academic Standards. For example:

For seventh grade reading, the curriculum map includes the following objective:

- *SWBAT analyze the central/universal idea or theme and then provide a detailed summary with text evidence.*

The standard listed along with this objective are:

7.RN.2.2 – Analyze the development of two or more central ideas over the course of a text; provide a detailed, objective summary.

This is the only objective listed on the map aligned to this standard.

In mathematics, the objectives listed in the curriculum map fall short of the rigor and depth of knowledge required in the standards. For seventh grade math, the curriculum map includes the following objectives:

- SWBAT: read and write integers and find the absolute value of an integer
- SWBAT: find the absolute value of an integer
- SWBAT: add integers
- SWBAT: subtract integers
- SWBAT: multiply integers
- SWBAT: divide integers

Two of the standards aligned to these objectives are:

7.C.2 Understand subtraction of rational numbers as adding the additive inverse, $p - q = p + (-q)$. Show that the distance between two rational numbers on the number line is the absolute value of their difference, and apply that principle to real-world problems.

7.C.3 Understand that multiplication is extended from fractions to rational numbers by requiring that operations continue to satisfy the properties of operations, particularly the distributive property, leading to products such as $(-1)(-1) = 1$ and the rules for multiplying signed numbers.

The objectives listed in the curriculum map focus specifically on the computational aspects of the standards and not the conceptual understanding. As a result, classroom instruction lacks rigor and often focuses on procedural knowledge at the expense of a deep conceptual understanding.

To complement the prioritized set of concrete instructional strategies, the corporation must equip teachers with tools and resources to ensure access to standards-aligned curriculum. Redesigning district level curriculum maps will ensure teachers have access to reliable curricular resources and allow them to focus on building their knowledge around the standards and improving their instructional execution.

VIII. Appendix A: Evidence for Remaining School Turnaround Principles

Background

We believe it is valuable for school and district leaders to have a summary of the TAT's findings and evidence for each of the eight Turnaround Principles. As such, this section of the report outlines key findings and supporting evidence for each of the Turnaround Principles that were not identified by school and district leaders as prioritized Turnaround Principles for this school.

This information is intentionally provided in an appendix to reinforce the importance of the previously stated findings, evidence, ratings, and recommendations for the school's prioritized Turnaround Principles.

School Turnaround Principle #1: School Leadership
Evidence Sources
Leadership Self-Evaluation, Leadership Team Meeting, Principal Meeting, District Leadership Team Meeting, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations
Evidence Summary
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Nearly 75% of the 23 teachers who submitted a survey at least somewhat agree with the statement, "Our principal ensures students and teachers feel safe, welcome and ready to learn and teach." (1.3)In response to teacher feedback and analysis of student behavior data, school leadership developed two teams of students and teachers at each grade level to ensure there is a single group of adults responsible for the success of a single group of students. (1.7)The school leader has the flexibility and has demonstrated a willingness to adjust the school schedule to meet student needs, including adding an uninterrupted, 90-minute ELA block and repurposing GROW period to focus on literacy. (1.8) <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers do not have sufficient access to standards-aligned materials and resources, and teachers are enabled to develop independent lessons that are not systematically linked to standards. (1.5)The leader must develop a culture of ongoing professional learning. Despite the leader sharing evidence of regular classroom walk-throughs, teacher surveys revealed that nearly 50% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "Our principal and school leaders observe and provide meaningful feedback to each teacher on a weekly basis to ensure instructional alignment with state standards." (1.6)

School Turnaround Principle #2: Climate and Culture	
Evidence Sources	
Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations, Parent Surveys	
Evidence Summary	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A school-wide PBIS system is in place, and teachers are encouraged to assign virtual PBIS points that students are able to use to purchase items at a store. While implemented inconsistently, both teachers and students shared confidence in the potential of the program. (2.1) Intentional focus on improving student behavior has resulted in a reduction in student discipline referrals over the past two years. (2.1) <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 65% of teacher survey respondents disagreed at least somewhat with the statement, "Our school rules and procedures are implemented consistently and communicated clearly to students, parents and staff." (2.1) There are no common classroom routines or instructional strategies in place. Classrooms are visited randomly without a systematic focus targeting specific instructional strategies. Nearly 50% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "Our principal and school leaders observe and provide meaningful feedback to each teacher on a weekly basis to ensure instructional alignment with state standards." (2.2) Expectations for instructional practices are unclear. Teachers do not receive consistent and effective support to use instructional strategies and data to improve instruction. (2.3) 	

School Turnaround Principle #5: Effective Staffing Practices	
Evidence Sources	
Instructional Leadership Team Meeting, Principal Meeting, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations, Parent Surveys	
Evidence Summary	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and district leadership make attempts to strategically assign and reassign staff based on staffing vacancies and student needs. Specifically, reassigning a veteran junior high school teacher from an elementary position, back to McCulloch; and, moving a licensed administrator from the high school to teach at McCulloch. (5.4) <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no evidence that professional development enables teachers to continuously reflect, revise, and evaluate their own classroom instruction. While professional development may be provided, it lacks necessary follow-up and consistency to effectively execute a continuous improvement cycle. (5.3) 	

School Turnaround Principle #6: Effective Use of Data	
Evidence Sources	
Leadership Focus Groups, Principal Meetings, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Classroom Observations, Parent Surveys	
Evidence Summary	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NWEA data is presented in a user-friendly format to monitor school-wide progress and inform programmatic and operational decisions at the school and district level. (7.1) Nearly 75% of teachers surveyed agree at least somewhat with the statement, “Teachers in our school use data gathered from multiple types of assessments to plan instruction and activities that support the learning styles and needs of all students.” (7.2) <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 50% of teachers surveyed agree at least somewhat with the statement, “Our school uses multiple forms of user friendly data.” (7.2) Current opportunities to analyze student performance data are limited to infrequent benchmark data and do not provide teachers the framework to measure standards-based student progress or reflect on the impact of specific instructional strategies. (7.3) Intervention time within the schedule holds a sole focus on reading instruction; math intervention is not embedded into the master schedule. (7.2) 	

School Turnaround Principle #8: Family and Community Engagement	
Evidence Sources	
Leadership Focus Groups, Principal Meetings, Educator Surveys, Educator Focus Groups, Student Focus Groups, Parent Surveys, Parent Focus Groups, Community Focus Groups	
Evidence Summary	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has fostered partnerships with key community organizations including Ivy Tech, Indiana Wesleyan University, and Marion Rehabilitation and Assisted Living Center to provide career-focused opportunities for students to engage with outside of school. (8.1) Evidence during the review demonstrated that community groups are welcomed as members of the school family, collaborating over the needs of students. (8.2) <p>Areas for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence collected during the review demonstrated that there is a disconnect between what students learn during the day and the opportunity to continue that learning after school hours. (8.2) Parents expressed a desire for greater access to social services within the school to meet student needs outside of academics. (8.1) 	